

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Spanish

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Raphaela's Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	St. Raphaela's Road Stillorgan Blackrock
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60361V

Date of Inspection: 21-11-2018



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SUBJECT INSPECTION

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Spanish under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	20 and 21 November
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and Spanish teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and Spanish teachers

School context

St. Raphaela's Secondary School is an all-girls voluntary secondary school, with an enrolment of 563 students. The school offers Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year programme (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational programme and the established Leaving Certificate. The study of a modern foreign language is compulsory in all years. Students choose between French and Spanish before entering first year.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good or good in the lessons observed.
- In the lessons observed, opportunities for students to speak Spanish varied; there was also variation in the effectiveness of teachers' approaches to formative assessment practices and differentiation.
- Subject provision and whole school support is very good.
- Highly effective collaborative practices were evident in the Spanish department.
- Planning was effective at a departmental and individual level.
- The emphasis on Wellbeing in the subject plan was evident in the lessons observed.

Recommendations

- To improve student competence and confidence in Spanish, all teachers should incorporate regular speaking activities into the fabric of lessons.
- Assessment practices should be reviewed and whole-school approaches to assessment, including teachers' provision of feedback to guide improvement on students' written work, should be agreed.
- To improve outcomes for all students, teachers should develop further strategies for differentiating learning and implement them in lessons.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good or good in the lessons observed.
- Interactions among students and between students and teachers were very respectful and positive, and conducive to well-being.
- All teachers had very good pedagogical knowledge and used their knowledge effectively to enhance learning in the classroom.
- Very good teacher use of the target language was evident in most lessons. Teachers should share strategies for maintaining target language use and implement them in lessons.
- Students' confidence and competence in communicating in Spanish varied in the lessons observed. In one lesson, students were well able to communicate in a level-appropriate manner. In the other lessons, some students struggled to understand and answer in Spanish. To improve student competence and confidence in Spanish, teachers should incorporate regular speaking activities into the fabric of lessons. Students should be encouraged to revisit previous topics learned orally in addition to talking about current learning.
- Lessons contained a range of activities designed to develop spoken and aural skills, as well as reading and writing. Lesson pace was very good and there were effective transitions between activities.
- Teachers designed and prepared in advance a sequence of learning tasks and activities suitable for the specific learning intentions of the lesson or series of lessons. Lesson design was flexible to allow for emerging learning opportunities. There was an over reliance on translation as a methodology in some lessons, which should be addressed.
- Highly effective grammar in context was observed in one lesson, where the teacher explained the meaning of a word by breaking down its grammatical elements and comparing it with other words students knew. This highly effective practice should be extended.
- In one lesson, an emphasis was placed on students repeating words and phrases after the teacher to consolidate learning and encourage correct pronunciation. This good practice should be extended.
- Teachers enabled students to make meaningful links between lesson material and their learning in other subjects. For example, language awareness was raised in one lesson by comparing the use of verbs in Irish and Spanish.
- Highly effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support learning was observed in the majority of lessons. Video and audio clips were chosen that were designed to consolidate the learning intentions. Teachers used web applications very effectively to assess student learning. The use of ICT to support learning should be extended.
- Teachers were aware of students' individual learning needs, and in some instances adapted teaching and learning strategies to help students overcome challenges. Teachers circulated during individual and group activities providing support where needed. Support was provided for oral activities in one instance through scaffolding. To improve outcomes for all students, teachers should develop further strategies for differentiating learning and implement them in lessons.
- Many highly effective formative assessment strategies were observed in some lessons. Teachers should share these strategies and extend their use across lessons.
- A review of student copybooks revealed a variation in teachers' approaches to correction of student work. In some instances, work was corrected extensively, but there was no evidence of students using those corrections to improve their learning. In another lesson, there was some correction and formative comments on student work. Monitoring of copybooks with affirmative comments was also observed. Teachers should discuss approaches to teacher

correction to progress student learning and encourage students to take responsibility and act on teachers' suggestions for improving their learning.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole school support is very good.
- The principal and other leaders in the school work to promote a learning culture. They have generally high expectations for students and lead staff in striving for improved outcomes. They support reflective practice and promote a culture of improvement.
- Students' holistic development is fostered through the provision of a broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities. It is suggested that further links be developed with sister schools in Spain. It is also suggested that teachers join the association of Teachers of Spanish to avail of professional support and student interschool Spanish activities.
- Teachers from the special educational needs department provide extra help for students of Spanish with additional needs.
- The principal and other leaders in the school recognise the importance of systematic monitoring to help students reach their full potential and have taken steps to initiate academic monitoring.
- Those in leadership and management roles support teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) in a range of areas. Teachers have attended CPD in Spanish, as well as in general teaching and learning methods, and make regular visits to Spain for linguistic upskilling.
- Class sets of tablets are available to use in lessons. These were used very effectively to support learning in some of the lessons observed.
- In light of Languages connect. Ireland's strategy for foreign languages in education 2017-2026, school leaders could consider the feasibility of offering students the option to study two modern foreign languages.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Highly effective collaborative practices are present in the Spanish department. In addition to collaborative planning and the sharing of resources, teachers also engage in peer observation across subjects. A Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) department has recently been configured to encourage collaboration across MFL.
- Regular subject department meetings take place. Minutes reflect that discussions are mainly administrative in nature. It is suggested that the department organise administrative issues electronically and use meeting times to focus on sharing strategies for progressing teaching and learning. Teachers also reported the value of the many informal collaborative meetings that take place.
- In light of the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023, it is welcomed that student wellbeing is an area of focus in the Spanish plan. The emphasis on Wellbeing was noted in the lessons observed.
- Subject department planning is effective. A good start has been made to junior cycle planning. Units of learning have been developed with reference to learning outcomes, learning intentions and assessment task. These now need to be progressed to include the language elements and student activities that will be needed to bring about the learning outcomes. It is recommended that MFL teachers work collaboratively to develop a common Junior Cycle MFL plan for the school.

- Highly effective practice was observed in the subject plan where the Spanish department has looked at recommendations from other inspections carried out in the school and reported on actions to be taken to implement them for Spanish.
- Teachers are to be commended for transferring their learning from Junior Cycle planning to Senior Cycle. In Senior Cycle plans they have created units of learning with associated learning intentions, assessment tasks and grammatical elements. To extend this good practice and develop these plans into active resources that facilitate collaborative teaching and learning, teachers should link the learning intentions with student activities and resources used in lessons. Curriculum plans could also include reflective review of teaching and learning.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a very good standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;